**“Soft Skills” and Project Management**

**AIPM IRC Bibliography,**

**28th October, 2004**

Introduction: “Soft Skills’ are becoming more and more identified as crucial to the ultimate success of projects, because it is people – not machines – that do the project work! Also known as “soft method” or “soft issues”, they differ from the “hard” approach of PM by focusing on Human skills such as communication, empathy, EQ, and good leadership. This selection of articles looks specifically at the use and/or importance of ”soft skills” in projects. See the many other bibliographies in the HR and Communication section of the IRC Bibliographies page for more detailed information on specific skills and methods!

   
   Keywords: Soft skills; Construction; stakeholders; military; design-build.

   **Abstract:** This research asserts that owner representatives have a positive impact on balancing projects constraints such as time, cost, quality, and scope in a design-build construction environment. It further asserts that soft skills are the most important skills for owner representatives on design-build projects. This research focuses on a specific owner representative, the U.S. Army Health facility Planning Agency, to determine if its project integration concept has a significant impact in balancing constraints on Army healthcare renewal projects. It also illustrates the importance of soft skills for project integrators, as they execute owner representative duties in a design-build environment.

   
   Keywords: Processes; managing and leading; planning; competence.

   **Abstract:** This paper present work on development and testing of the SMART Project Planning Framework. It is based on research into causes of both project failure and success. An empirical study of what industry practitioners think is important for effective project planning fumed the basis of this study. Using this study, and other resources, a planning approach was developed that was designed to be holistic, integrated and risk sensitive. Field tests of the approach on live projects followed. The framework presents a unified approach to project planning, integrating both hard and soft aspects, enhancing current tools and techniques, and improving the project planning process by providing internal validation. Competence in project planning is reinforced as a cornerstone to effectively managing and leading projects.

   
   Keywords: Leadership; skills mix; human resources; competencies, soft skills.

   **Abstract:** Project Managers are often called upon to be all things for all people and, depending on where the project is when you join, you will perform many roles during the life of a project, including Captain and leader, salesperson, counselor, facilitator, and accountant!

   
   Keywords: Human resources; soft skills; teams; leadership; competencies.

   **Abstract:** Nothing happens without humans. So what are the three most important competencies for project managers? Planning, team building and leadership. This article looks at the latter two categories, and the "soft" skills that are required to excel at them.

   
   Keywords: ERP; CRM; IT; software implementation; soft issues, change management.

   **Abstract:** The more things change the more they stay the same. Nothing is truer in the world of project management. Compares CRM projects to ERP projects and decides it's still the soft issues that matter for success, no matter what the project is called, or what it is.

   
   Keywords: Construction; risk management; human resource management; soft factors; multi-disciplinary; soft skills.

   **Abstract:** The blind spot in traditional management mindsets is people. The construction industry has overlooked these "soft" factors in risk analysis, and this has led to a serious underestimation of the risks involved in construction projects. The article lists the main troublesome resource and management issues, and recommends that as part of the risk management process, the retention of key personnel should be formalised into a risk mitigation plan.

   
   Keywords: organisational change; government; soft systems; public sector, soft skills.

   **Abstract:** Successful implementation of a major policy change in a New South Wales government agency required complex information system changes and multiple business adjustments. Article looks at the use of a framework known as Soft Systems Project Management (SSPMA) in order to achieve organisational change, and compares "hard" and "soft" approaches to project management.
8. Foti, R. **Learn From the Pros - Consultants bring more than best practices to an organization. They balance interpersonal skills with analytical techniques to drive project efficiency.** *PM Network* 17(12), 36-43. 2003.

   **Abstract**: Project consultants continue to be in high demand, in part because most organizations still lack enterprise project management capability. Although consultants are usually judged on whether they deliver quality products on time, and provide useful analysis that leads to value-added process improvements, the most critical prerequisites to success are people skills and an understanding of the client organization's culture. Most of the project consultants cited in this article agree that the keys to success include obtaining executive support, maintaining good communication and feedback, managing change with a sensitivity to employees' emotions, and being receptive to all stakeholder investments. Trust and confidence in a consultant develop over time, and consultants need soft skills to deliver the hard numbers that management wants. Includes illustrative matter.


   **Keywords**: strategic management; systems approach; hard projects; soft projects; collaborative research; experiential learning.

   **Abstract**: Public sector organisations worldwide are under pressure to increase efficiency while delivering improved and integrated services. Governments are promoting adoption of project-based management and use of formal project management methodologies developed in the context of essentially hard projects in industries where goals and methods are well defined. Problems in applying hard project management practice to the business of government and, in particular, to soft projects such as organisational change, challenge current project management standards and practices. Some writers and researchers have turned to soft systems thinking for enlightenment. They have identified possible links between project management practice and Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). However, examples of reported practical application have been few and limited in scope. This paper reports on the outcome of a team of practitioner-researcher's attempts to link SSM and project management practice in several public sector agencies in Australia.


    **Keywords**: managing projects; managing and leading; competence; culture; gender; soft skills; hard skills.

    **Abstract**: Strong isomorphic forces are at work in the emerging project management profession. At the same time, competent project management practice is evolving and expanding to include both soft and hard skills. Contemporary gender scholarship purports that these different skill sets are founded on inherently gendered logic systems. Thus, questioning regarding the role of masculine and feminine logic systems is project management become increasingly important. We deconstruct portions of one of the pre-eminent isomorphic forces at work today – the Project Management Body of Knowledge – to initiate discussion on the ways in which gendered logic systems play in role generally-accepted project management practice.

11. Foti, R. **Mission control: By focusing on soft skills, this Canadian aerospace development firm improved its project management practices. In the process, the company refined its niche and diversified its portfolio.** *PM Network* 17(7), 22-29. 2003.

    **Keywords**: change management; HRM; human resource management.

    **Abstract**: This article features a profile of MD Robotics, an Ontario, Canada-based aerospace company commissioned by the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) to manufacture an International Space Station component called the special-purpose dexterous manipulator (SPDM). MD Robotics decided to reinvent themselves as a company, using the SMPD unique new one-off design project to implement change management throughout the organization. The project staff and management transferred to a single floor of the building to encourage free communication and problem-solving, and a 'no surprises' policy was instituted. Peer review processes like the systems engineering technical review (SETR) facilitated the timely resolution of issues, and enabled quick management buy-in. The SPDM statement of work (SOW) detailed milestones and deliverables, and was integrated by a schedule that tied customer payment to milestones. The critical path was continuously 'worked,' and innovative risk management techniques led to concurrent engineering and partnerships with suppliers.

12. Logue, A. C. **Perform, Lead, Win - Successful project managers consider soft skills from the start and plan for smooth, efficient team interaction.** *PM Network* 17(2), 40-45. 2003.

    **Keywords**: teams in the workplace; team development.

    **Abstract**: When assembling a project team, project managers have to consider more than technical skills. To insure smooth, efficient team interaction, project managers must also take into account soft skills such as the personality issues. Conflict can be detrimental to project success. Consequently during the team selection and project execution phases, project managers must stress compatibility and team development through mentoring and communication.


    **Keywords**: Culture; sensitivity; soft skills.

    **Abstract**: As the workplace becomes more diverse and increasingly international, project managers need to better understand cultural differences. This article features an interview with Sheilina Somani, winner of the 2002 PMI European Palme D'Or for soft skills. Ms. Somani believes that project managers who fail to take into account cultural diversity have failed to manage their risks or utilize the assets of their team. Diverse people coming from different backgrounds can bring different perspectives and attitudes to a project, and help to accommodate culture within the business context. Being aware of the different ways that people from other cultures think and react can help project managers avoid conflict and misunderstanding. The article contains a discussion of the 'seven dimensions of culture' as formulated by cross-cultural consultant Fons Trompenaars. Includes illustrative matter.
14. Cunningham, J., Griffin, R., Martin, K., and Violette, D. J. **Soft Skills, Hard Numbers** By involving staff in planning and control, a skilled project manager can mold a group of individuals into a committed team. *PM Network* 16(6), 60-63. 2002.

Keywords: Human Resource Management; Project Teams; Planning; Motivation.

**Abstract:** Projects will be more effective if their project managers involve the project team in project planning and control (PP&C). Commitment to a project can be enhanced by including team development in PP&C. Team development or human resource management includes clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, team motivation, team communication needs, and conflict management.

15. Jaafari A. **Can the project management profession respond to the challenges of social, cultural and industrial transformation?** *Australian Project Manager* 2002;22(1):21-3.

Keywords: ICPMA; Global Changes; Change Management; Soft Projects.

**Abstract:** Looks at the reasons for the establishment of the International Council for Project Management Advancement.


Keywords: construction; planning; project success; changing conditions.

**Abstract:** The development of skills at the strategic level of projects ensures all stakeholders are committed to the project outcomes. The project manager must be able to develop and manage these soft skills to ensure the project is not only delivered successfully, but also delivers the appropriate result.


Keywords: communication; global projects; web technology; internet technology; IT; information technology.

Call Number: CON 39

**Notes:** In general we have two major success factors inside our global projects - definition of objectives, and communication. Within Infineon we are forced to think globally. Therefore we have to setup virtual world wide teams and lead them to our corporate targets. To assure a common understanding of our corporate objectives we increase moderation and project management skills. But never the less, which IT solution you implement, only your human skilled resources are responsible for good or bad target definitions. To ensure a global communication we implement a web based IT solution.

Also, we write down some general rules, how to act for information providing, collaboration work and knowledge sharing.


Keywords: Cost estimation and control; Portfolio Management; NSW Rural Fire Service.

Call Number: CON 37

**Abstract:** This paper presents experiences in management of organisational change initiatives involving the development and use of a project or program management approach informed by soft systems thinking and practice. Project management is recognised as having origins in systems analysis and engineering, which are considered to be the hard end of systems thinking, based on assumptions of predictability, functionality and control. Soft systems approaches stem from a different worldview characterised by unpredictability, uncertainty and ambiguity. Although there have been some attempts to link management and soft systems thinking, few practical applications have been reported and these have been limited to specific aspects of the project process such as project and risk definition. Uses the NSW Rural Fire Services organisational change portfolio as an example.


Keywords: Project Managers; Success; Skills.

**Abstract:** Looks at the soft skills as opposed to those hard ones that project managers should have to succeed.


Keywords: communication in organisations; project communications management.

**Abstract:** In the Communication Age, we must learn to extract the knowledge from the information, put it into a dynamic ‘digital’ form, and communicate it to cause action.

The objective of this paper is to slow things down and to take a closer look at what makes communication - and communicators - effective or not so effective. It will demonstrate ways of how to build your skills as a communicator to make your interactions more productive and enjoyable by examining how to:

1. Communicate with Others
2. Influence Others
3. Build Trust
4. Handle Conflict

Technology and globalization now have created an environment in which teams communicate and collaborate virtually, across boundaries of time, geography, and organization. Technology introduces a critical variable that radically changes the choices for, and the effectiveness of, communication and collaboration.

The fact remains, that all these forms of information communication play a key role in today's businesses, but the soft skills of communication will never change regardless of the technology. While the project manager must understand the technology sufficiently, it is his soft skills, which help him, communicate effectively in order to deal with vendors of communications products and services thus, making cost-effective choices among the growing array of technological options.
Keywords: executive ability; project managers.

Abstract: Success in life is generally not based merely upon what we know. It is based on correctly applying the knowledge that we have. This principle is equally true in project management and business in general. One major aspect of project management is getting things done through other people. As project managers, we spend (or should be spending) in excess of 75% of our time communicating.

The aim of this presentation is not to go searching for gold. There are nuggets that lie all around us. Our goal during this session is to take a look at some of these nuggets of gold. We shall call them PM-Nuggets. Project Management Nuggets! These wise sayings did not originate with me. They are nuggets I picked up along the road on my 30 years journey while working on information systems projects. They are brief statements that we, as project managers, would easily relate to or need to be reminding ourselves of. Some are statements I heard during presentations. Others are nuggets I picked while reading books or articles on project management or general management. These are a combination of ideas from various sources. We will spend a few minutes on each nugget. I will share my views and solicit your opinion in an open discussion session. Some might sound very corny, trite or old-hat. You might even disagree with some of them. But they have been proven to be effective. The ultimate goal is that each of us will take away at least one nugget that we will apply in our projects during the next 30 days.

I have selected the following 7 nuggets for us to consider during the brief time that we have:

PM-Nugget 1: “It’s the people, stupid!”
* People determine the success or failure of a project
* People are the most important project resources
* The Project Manager must have good people skills, be a good motivator and team leader and be well respected throughout the organization
* The Project Manager must make sure that ALL CONTRIBUTORS understand their roles and responsibilities
* In order for a project to be most successful, Project Managers and organizations need to pay attention to the total needs of the project participants (people)

PM-Nugget 2: "Sharing In The Vision"
* The whole project team MUST have buy-in to the goals
* Everyone must share the vision (i.e. everyone must commit to be part of the vision)
* Team members must be involved in some level of project planning, not just told what their task is and how long they have to complete it.

PM-Nugget 3: "A-Da-Boy!"
It is very important for us as Project Managers to celebrate our contributors who go above and beyond the call of duty to make things happen. What are some ways we can celebrate our people?

PM-Nugget 4: "A stitch in time saves nine!"
Quality is the degree to which the customer’s requirements and expectations are satisfied
Quality doesn’t just happen; the requirements for quality must be integrated into the project plan
The cost of avoiding mistakes is always much less than the cost of correcting them

PM-Nugget 5: "Snake Under Grass!"
What is the Difference between RISK and UNCERTAINTY?
To qualify as a RISK, all the following 3 criteria must be satisfied:
We must be able to:
1. Identify the risk event
2. Determine the probability of occurrence
3. Estimate its impact
If we have only 2 of the above 3 criteria, then we have UNCERTAINTY

PM-Nugget 6: "Don’t Ignore the Stakeholders!"
The project management team must identify the stakeholders, determine their needs and expectations and "manage and influence those expectations" to ensure a successful project.

PM-Nugget 7: What is a Core Team?
You might say “duh, everyone knows what a Core Team is!” As basic as this might sound, organizations, and even different departments within the same organization, have different interpretations of the purpose of a Core Team and the roles/responsibilities of the members of the Core Team. Every member of the Core Team has equal votes. The Core Team can be viewed as an organization of which the Project Manager is the President. The Core Team members can be viewed as Executive Vice Presidents. The President has overall responsibility but does not make all the decisions.

Conclusion:
Through these PM-Nuggets, we have reminded ourselves that knowing the pure mechanics of project management does not guarantee project success. A major reason for project success is determined by our human touch, our soft-skills. My hope is for each of us to remember to apply plain vanilla common sense in managing our projects. Most of the knowledge we need to be successful project managers is already at our fingertips. We should remember that project management involves dealing with human beings who need to understand and share in the vision for the project.


24. Fox S. An ancient tool in project management. Connections 2000. PMI Seminars and Symposium. Proceedings; 2000 Sept. 7-2000 Sept. 16; AIPM (CD-Rom). USA: PMI; 2000. Keywords: project management - women; female executives; intuition; executive job descriptions. **Abstract**: Reaping the Benefits of the Woman's Intuition. In recent years, the subject of intuition has emerged from obscurity. Intuition is increasingly recognized as a natural mental faculty, a key element in the creative process, a means of discovery, problem solving, and decision making. Once considered the province of a gifted few, it is now recognized as an innate capacity available to everyone--not a rare, accidental talent, but a natural skill anyone can cultivate. A key ingredient in what we call genius, it is also an important tool when applied to everyday life.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the Roles of the Project Manager and to demonstrate that women are born "Natural Project Managers". Most project managers are trained in the technology of their projects, but lack an understanding of the managerial functions necessary to do their jobs well. Women with their natural intuitions and motherhood instincts lead the team through a project with fewer headaches. Women created their own personal "bag of tricks" to tap their intuitive wisdom in any situation.

Each project manager, regardless of the gender, must fill several roles and responsibilities in the completion of a project. The most important roles that a project manager must master will be discussed here:

1. Integrator:
2. Communicator
3. Team Leader
4. Decision Maker
5. Climate creator or Builder

The above roles are second nature to any woman and by using "intuitions" they increase the confidence in their abilities to perform any kind of jobs, regardless of the environment. How attuned are you to the subtle messages around you, like those hidden behind our spoken communications or those carried by synchronicities and omens? There is guidance available to us at all times, just below the surface of our logic, just after we stop pushing and striving, just before we jump to conclusions. By cultivating the ability to pause and be comfortable with silence, and then by focusing steadily and listening for the first sounds or feeling for the first impressions, you can help your intuition wake up suddenly and enthusiastically, as if from a long winter's nap.

Although intuition is a natural resource, it functions best when developed and exercised. Like a muscle, intuition becomes strong, reliable, and precise when trained and put to use. But because our culture stresses the importance of "analytic thinking", we often forget we have this inner source of wisdom and insight. We're like the hapless hero of the old V-8 Juice ad who mindlessly guzzled a soft drink, then slapped his forehead and said, "Gee, I could've had a V-8!" How many times have you heard someone ruefully say, "I knew that was going to happen"? They were really saying, "Gee, I could have listened to my intuition!"

25. Crawford L, Costello K. Towards a transferable methodology for managing strategic change by projects. IRNOP IV Conference - Paradoxes of Project Collaboration in the Global Economy: Interdependence, Complexity and Ambiguity 2000. Keywords: Change; Public Sector; IRNOP IV; Methodologies. Call Number: ART00052

**Abstract**: This paper will reflect upon the experience of the collaborative research team in developing and applying a model using Soft Systems Methodology to make sense of the project management transformation process underway in two government agencies.

26. Smith D. The project manager in the new millennium: key factors for success. Outcomes-Based Management - Into the New Millenium 3-5 November 1999; AIPM - South Africa: Project Management Institute of South Africa PMISA; 1999. Keywords: PMISA Conference; Proceedings; South Africa; PMBOK; Project Teams. Call Number: CDROM collection

**Abstract**: The study derived 17 "soft" factors that are deemed important in ensuring the effective management of project teams. Many of these factors relate to sound people management and, overall, they provide a considerable challenge to project managers. Application of these factors in a project will take up considerable management time and effort if done correctly. Project managers need to develop this wide array of "soft" skills and abilities to ensure high team performance and successful project outcomes in the next century.


**Abstract**: Trust is an essential element of project work. It is important to understand how trust develops, why people trust and how it affects the outcomes of projects. This is necessary, to utilize trust as a new (soft) tool in the project manager's toolkit, and take advantage of the benefits. This paper provides insights into trust and how it can be used by project managers to enable project success.
   Keywords: Soft Projects; NSW Police Service; Public Sector.
   Call Number: ART00077
   **Abstract:** UTS and the NSW Police Service in collaboration conducted a research project that aimed to enhance the theoretical understanding of interdependent “soft” projects. This project is the basis for developing improved management systems. With action research as the primary methodology, it used project management practices and systems theory as a framework and Reform Agenda projects of the NSW Police Service as a case study. This paper will present the rationale, aims, methodology and expected outcomes for the study as a basis for critical peer review.

29. Storm P. **Management of soft projects.** IPMA 96 World Congress on Project Management; 1996; AIPM. IPMA; 1996.
   Keywords: soft projects.
   Call Number: ST15
   **Abstract:** Different projects require different management approaches. In this paper it is argued that soft projects should be distinguished from firm projects. After describing the nature of soft projects and explaining the growing need for soft projects, the paper presents an overview of the specific characteristics of soft projects. Soft projects do not require a fundamentally different approach, but they do call for adaptations to the conventional approach of firm projects. These adaptations are illustrated in an example involving an organizational change program in an insurance company.

30. Ruuska K. **Project communication.** IPMA 96 World Congress on Project Management; 1996; AIPM. IPMA; 1996.
   Keywords: project communication management.
   Call Number: IC8
   **Abstract:** In literature, project management is often covered from the technical viewpoint. A project is regarded as a way of solving technical problems and project management has thus been limited to only containing a set of planning methods and reporting practices (the hard side of project management). Modern project management is a much wider concept. Of course it is necessary to be able to use planning methods and reporting tools but that, in itself, is not enough. Successful project management depends ultimately on the right leadership, a proper functioning of the informal organisational structures and the decision making processes; and last but not least the project team’s ability to communicate effectively with the project’s immediate environment (the soft side of project management). It is this importance given to good communication skills and the attention paid to human factors that differentiates project management from the functional management styles. A project manager’s role as a communicator is important. He needs to be a good communicator within the project, as well as between the project and its relevant environment that may embrace such entities as customers, user organisations, line managers and other interest groups.

31. Mercer D. **From adversary to ally; Partnership with suppliers in the capital goods industry - The lessons for project managers.** IPMA 96 World Congress on Project Management; 1996; AIPM. IPMA; 1996.
   Keywords: partnerships; alliancing; alliances; suppliers; UK.
   Call Number: ST19
   **Abstract:** Changes in technology, the competitive environment and other pressures are prompting many organisations to seek collaborative, rather than adversarial, relationships with their suppliers. This paper is an examination of the role of Project Managers and Project Management in bringing about such a change in the U.K. capital goods industry and is based on research conducted at both an industry and organisational level. The forces for and against change are identified from which a series of recommendations are made in the ‘hard’ areas of strategy, structure, systems and resources and the ‘soft’ areas of style, skills and shared visions. The paper concludes that the role of Project Managers lies in more emphasis on the ‘soft’ issues. Furthermore, this paper proposes that Programme Management is an appropriate mechanism for the successful implementation of the recommended changes.

32. Jain A. **Balancing hard and soft qualities of a project manager.** IPMA 96 World Congress on Project Management; 1996; AIPM. IPMA; 1996.
   Keywords: project managers; soft skills; hard skills; project manager characteristics.
   Call Number: IC1
   **Abstract:** This paper deals with the importance of ‘hard’ attributes of a project manager vis a vis his ‘soft’ attributes. The efficacy of the project team would largely depend on the right balance of these ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ attributes. 740 Indian managers from top, medium and low level were covered in this survey. 137 attributes were initially listed which were further short listed to 48 attributes covering both ‘hard’ & ‘soft’ planes. These were then classified into Vital, Essential and Desirable attributes based on the respondents replies to effectively balance the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ qualities of a project manager. Project Management techniques, have been long used for ‘hard’ projects covering construction activities, installation of new production lines and for complex aero-space/defence projects. Today, its concepts are being applied in ‘soft’ projects as well. These relate to activities such as organisation of cultural change, human network aspects, total quality management, re-engineering etc.

To obtain copies of any of the above documents, please visit the AIPM website [www.aipm.com.au](http://www.aipm.com.au) under "Knowledge Resources - Document Delivery", or contact the IRC Manager on 02-9252 7277 or kevin@aipm.com.au